

# ADOT Environmental & Enhancement Group

Annual Report  
FY 2002–2003

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# Environmental & Enhancement Annual Report

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

### Intermodal Transportation Division (ITD)

The mission of the Intermodal Transportation Division is to provide the highest quality intermodal transportation system in America.

### Environmental and Enhancement Group (EEG)

The Environmental and Enhancement Group provides Environmental, Enhancement and Scenic Roads services for transportation activities through compliance with regulatory requirements, providing the highest level of professional technical support and education to our agency and customers, while building cooperative relationships with other government agencies and the public.

#### Environmental Management Section (EMS)

The mission of the Environmental Management Section is to provide environmental clearances through compliance with regulatory requirements, provide education to our agency and customers, and build cooperative relationships with other government entities and the public.

#### Environmental Technical Section (ETS)

The mission of the ETS is to provide the highest level of professional technical support and information to its customers in preparing and completing environmental documents and for making management decisions.

#### Transportation Enhancement and Scenic Roads Section (TE/SR)

The TE/SR of the EEG of ADOT is charged with the development of projects which enhance surface transportation facilities by providing amenities that go above and beyond what is typically required for roadway projects while adhering to the applicable federal and state legislation including the development of Parkways, Historic and Scenic Roads in Arizona.

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The Environmental & Enhancement Group is responsible for assuring that the development process in ADOT meets high standards for environmental stewardship and enhancement, while at the same time promoting expedited project delivery. Quality customer service is a priority for the broad scope of customers involved in the environmental review process. Customers include federal and state agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Environmental Protection Agency, the Bureau of Land Management, the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona's Native American tribes, and the Arizona Historic Preservation Office, and the Arizona Departments of Game and Fish, Water Resources, and Environmental Quality. The EEG works with Arizona cities by including them as recipients for funding for enhancement projects, and responds to the localized concerns of neighborhoods, communities, and individual residents.

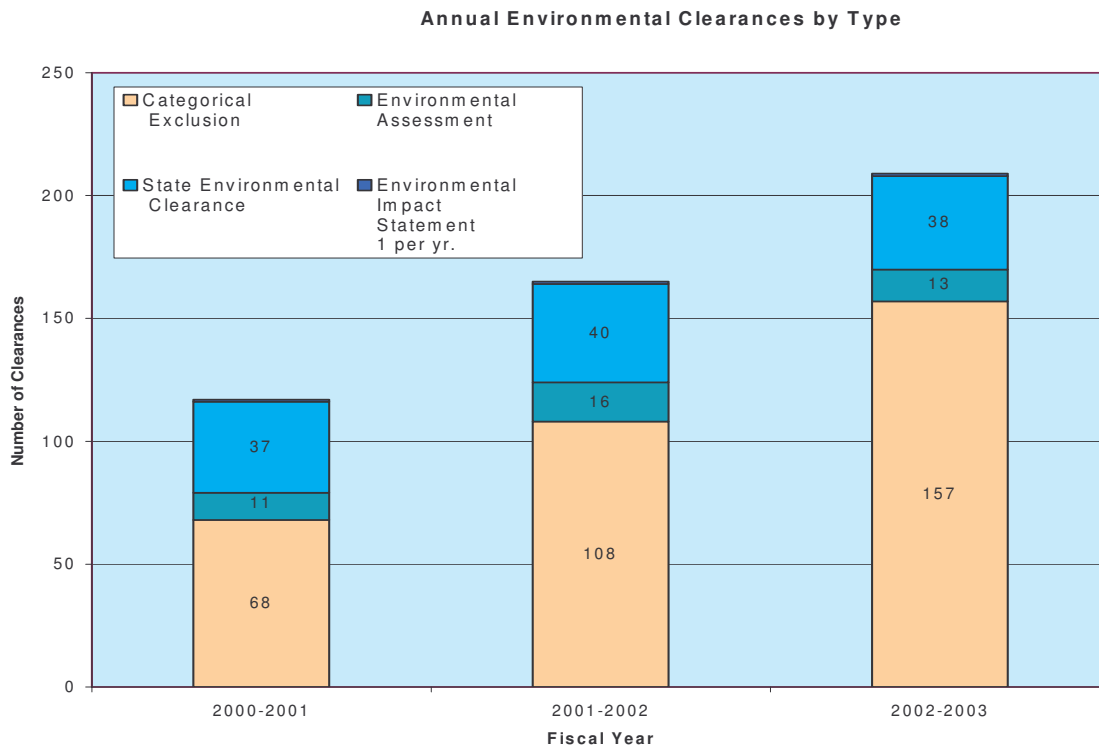
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## SUMMARY

This report presents EEG's FY 2002-2003 achievements in Process Improvements, Education and Training, Technology Enhancements, Cooperative Agency Initiatives, and Research and Policy Development. EEG consistently strives to improve its operations by providing improved service with lower costs and greater effectiveness. TE/SR has laid the groundwork for more, faster, and better enhancement work. Planning staff accomplished multiple improvements while still substantially exceeding the target number environmental reviews for the year. ADOT's FY 2002-2003 schedule anticipated advertising 113 projects: EEG completed environmental work on over 200, and issued many clearances before program bid dates.

The Group uses a variety of methods to continuously monitor its performance and improve its value to the ADOT organization. One measure of this work is the number of environmental clearances actually issued within a fiscal year. This number has shown consistent increases over the last three fiscal years. EEG has plans for the coming year to continue additional improvements within its operations.

In addition to the improved productivity noted in processing environmental issues related to ADOT construction, EEG's TE/SR Section not only enhanced working relationships with their many partners, but also completed significant projects throughout the state which make Arizona's roadways more beautiful and accessible to all users.



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**This report presents accomplishments in the following categories:**

**Process Improvements**

**Better Partnerships**

**Technology Enhancements**

**Education and Training**

**Cooperative Agency Initiatives**

**Research and Policy Development**

## **Process Improvements**

EEG simplified paperwork and procedures. The environmental determination guidelines were revised for clarity and efficiency. The use of these new guidelines has resulted in a final product that is easier to review, and helps to ensure that a quality document is provided on the first submittal.

The EEG Project Data Sheets, which were developed to provide comprehensive project information early in the process, have been improved to make them more useful for the planners and consultants.

EEG surveyed key stakeholders to identify the role of public involvement in the project development process. Survey results were used to address the needs of the project managers and their team members including the communities in which the projects are located.

The EEG staff is reengineering existing procedures to create a comprehensive manual that will incorporate procedures for each technical and socioeconomic discipline, and for all environmental clearance activities. This manual will serve the

dual purpose of increasing understanding of the legally required compliance procedures, while also providing a training module for staff and consultants.

*The EEG Historic Preservation Team* has worked with the Natural Resources Section to establish a process for the identification and avoidance of culturally sensitive sites when carrying out routine maintenance activities. The team has completed surface surveys of archaeological sites for all ADOT right-of-way. This information has been entered into a Geographic Information System (GIS) data base to provide easy access to information for projects and activities located within existing ROW (see also technology enhancements).

*The EEG TE/SR Section* conducted a customer survey to identify customer needs and target process improvements, as well as provide baseline data to measure future performance. The group has improved



its TE application based on customer suggestions to simplify and clarify the application process. In response to identified customer needs and in conjunction with the Transportation Enhancement Review committee, the TE Program Handbook was developed



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to provide unified guidelines and procedures for local government TE



projects. The *TE/SR Scenic Roads Team* completed the Corridor Management Plan (CMP) for Patagonia-Sonoita Scenic Road (SR 82, SR 83). This was the first CMP completed by ADOT and was highlighted by a positive cooperative effort by all agencies and locals involved along the Scenic Road. As a result of the CMP, a Citizen's Advisory Committee representing all stakeholders was established to address and manage the goals identified in the CMP.

Twelve other Corridor Management Plans along state designated Scenic Roads are under way. Phase I has been completed on both Historic Route 66 and US 191, Coronado Trail.

The *ETS Hazardous Materials Team* has coordinated with other areas



within ADOT and to identify needs for and procedures related to asbestos testing during the environmental clearance process. As part of this process, the team has developed guidelines to conduct asbestos surveys for all load-bearing structures (bridges and box culverts) that will be modified or altered as part of any construction project. In addition, the Hazardous Materials team is testing for heavy metals for any project that involves work on an existing structure that has been previously painted.

The *ETS Air and Noise Team* established a Noise Hotline (1-800-NOISYRD) to respond to noise concerns from the public and improve the process of tracking noise issues. This has facilitated responsiveness and allowed for full information to be



quickly accessed while responding to inquiries.

## Better Partnerships

Staff continued to work with the FHWA and other agencies to standardize documents. Tribal consultation letters, scoping letters, and environmental assessments have been standardized to expedite production and review of required documentation, both in-house and by outside agencies.

The EEG is charged with the responsibility for assuring that the sources for construction materials

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receive an environmental review similar to other construction projects. In 2003, EEG placed both the materials source environmental analysis application and a set of materials source review tips on the EEG website in order to simplify and streamline the materials source reviews and approval process.



The *EMS Biology Team* has coordinated with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to implement a unique "in lieu" habitat restoration program. The "in lieu" concept permits low-impact habitat restorations to be replaced by equivalent financial awards to small private or volunteer organizations performing high-impact environmental protection projects away from the roadway. All partnering agencies work together to determine appropriate and improved mitigation strategies. While ADOT's habitat mitigation efforts comply with the law, the money spent on mitigation under this program can be utilized more constructively to enhance degraded habitats.

The TE/SR has developed a process with FHWA to grant approval for local governments to bid and administer Transportation Enhancement projects, allowing an expedited process for local government TE projects.

## Technology Enhancements

EEG began full utilization of its sophisticated environmental information systems. A centralized database maintains information regarding the number of projects, responsible staff, due dates, concerns and the current status of the project for

each specialty (air, water, hazardous materials, etc.). The database is queried to produce reports that previously took hours to prepare. Managers can obtain indicators of staff performance with immediate access to information on individual workloads, potential project delays, or projects along a particular roadway. Staff can note issues and concerns online, so that this information is immediately available throughout the organization.

The utilization of EEG's extensive in-house GIS capabilities are being applied to an array of functions to provide information regarding environmental issues and the ADOT transportation programs, such as identifying air quality non-attainment areas, locating new critical habitat, and providing information regarding locations of sensitive resources.

The *ETS Historic Preservation Team* has developed a Web based GIS data management system, which includes all statewide ADOT right-of-way along interstate and state highways. This system allows for more efficient access to all data on historic properties within the ADOT right-of-way. The system includes:

- Over 1,000 survey reports transferred to electronic format.
- Associated consultation and/or concurrence documentation in electronic format.
- Location information on approximately 9,000 sites within the ADOT right-of-way.
- Secure multi-level access for the historic preservation team.

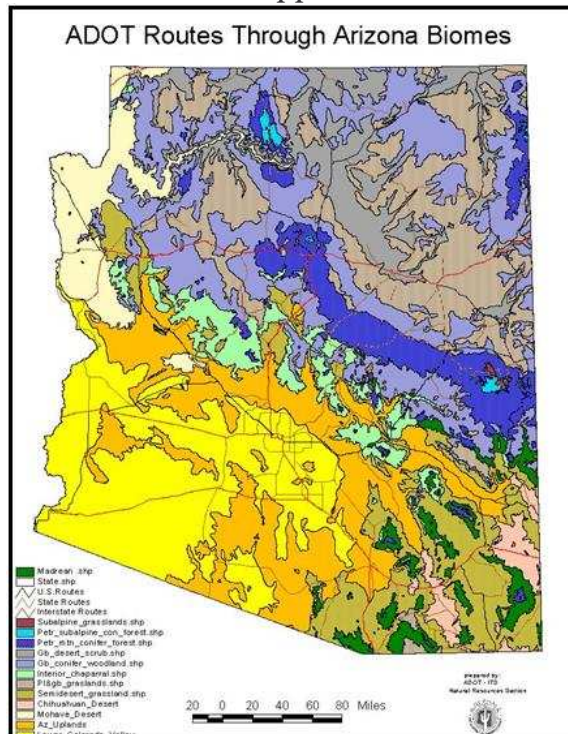
The *ETS Hazardous Materials Team* has surveyed nearly all state and interstate roadways to identify hazardous materials sites, and the results of these efforts have been incorporated into a statewide GIS data base. The hazardous materials staff



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uses aerial photographs and a video log system (covering over 6000 miles), along with GIS and Global Positioning System (GPS) information, to review nearly 250 sites annually. Pre-identification of hazardous materials issues minimizes environmental review time and helps ADOT avoid purchasing right-of-way where costly cleanups would increase the cost of construction. When cleanup is required, this information allows remediation to proceed with minimal costs, soil disturbance, human exposure, and liability.

The *ETS Biology Team* developed a tracking system to alert staff regarding the status of biology submittals, and to track the length of time required for land managing agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to approve documents.



This prevents schedule slippage due to late submittals and provides a mechanism to more accurately identify time frames for other agency's reviews.

The *ETS Air/Noise Team* is developing a database, associated with the GIS, that will include existing noise-barrier locations, historical chronology of noise complaints and responses, existing noise levels at key locations on the urban freeway system, and dates of public knowledge for the urban corridors, etc. This will better organize the noise program, and better utilize limited resources to respond to noise issues more efficiently.

## Education and Training

EEG developed a number of outreach and training programs. EEG staff has on-the-road sessions with key ADOT District staff throughout the state, to inform and answer questions about various environmental programs and requirements. Responding to an issue raised by staff, EEG has improved coordination with its numerous consultants using scheduled quarterly meetings. EEG holds monthly "brown bag" lunch presentations on environmental and enhancement topics, at no cost, in order to provide information to ADOT staff and consultants and foster stewardship throughout the agency and within the consultant community.



EEG routinely coordinates the Arizona presentation of National

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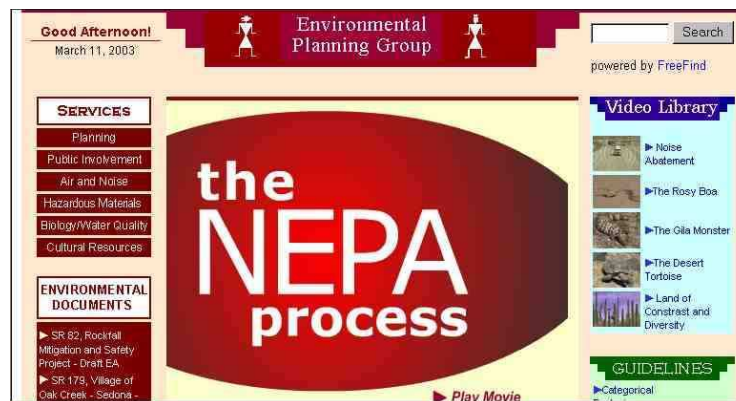
Highway Institute courses, including topics such as NEPA and Transportation Decision-Making (held on February 18-20, 2003), Environmental Justice, and Public Involvement.

EEG has embraced technology, especially the use of multiple-accessed databases, websites, GIS and Global Positioning Systems (GPS). EEG staff maintain a separate website ([www.adotenvironmental.com](http://www.adotenvironmental.com)), which presents not only public information on specific projects, but also informs users (particularly outside consultants) about requirements and formats used for environmental documents submitted to ADOT. EEG has produced a small

Procedures; and Streamlining Project Development and Implementation Procedures.

Over the past year, EEG staff has made presentations to the following: Statewide Permits meeting, quarterly Resident Engineers/Project Managers meeting, Local Government Workshops, Councils of Governments and Metropolitan Planning Organizations meetings, the ADOT Maintenance Conference, Roads and Streets Conference, the National Transportation Research Board, Arizona Archaeological Council, and a variety of other local, state and national meetings.

The EEG sponsors training made available throughout the agency. Examples include a one day public outreach workshop attended by approximately forty people, as well as numerous on-the-road training sessions for district personnel. A one-half day Section 106 Training, clarifying federal requirements for considering effects of actions on historic properties as part of the environmental process was sponsored by the Historic Preservation Team.



series of training videos, including endangered species and highway noise, and in 2002 the EEG video library was placed on the web page.

The TE/SR staff met with the Transportation Enhancement Review Committee during a day-long facilitated workshop to update and clarify processes and procedures for the Transportation Enhancement program. A customer survey and interview results were presented, then the following areas of the program were discussed: Project Funding and Conditions; Program Implementation Policies; Transportation Relevance Policies; Application Process Procedures; Training/Mentoring

## Cooperative Agency Initiatives

EEG pursues multiple opportunities to partner with other agencies in order to improve efficiency and to standardize procedure. Programmatic agreements have been developed regarding impacts to threatened and endangered species, historic roads, and new methods for consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office regarding transportation enhancement projects. Improved procedures for standardizing documents with FHWA have been implemented. A multi-year intensive partnering with the Bureau of Land Management in Arizona has been



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completed, resulting in a new Memorandum of Understanding and several related process modifications designed to improve productivity.

In external organizations such as the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Tonto National Forest, and the State Historic Preservation Office where external staff shortages have prevented speedy processing, EEG has “outsourced” staff to those agencies. Staff work for the outside agencies, but are paid by ADOT, and is dedicated to processing ADOT work. EEG is now working toward creating a contract position at the U S Fish and Wildlife Service to expedite the Endangered Species Act compliance process.

## Research and Policy Development

Research activities are underway to assess the benefits and impacts of various frequently requested project enhancements, such as wildlife crossings and use of rubberized asphalt. FHWA has agreed to allow the use of federal funds to overlay the urban freeways as a pilot program. This pilot program, now underway, is the first in the nation. The purchase of state-of-the-art equipment will allow for accurate measurement of the success of the pilot program, and will also provide the capability to be extremely accurate when positioning instruments and collecting field data.

EEG has adopted a proactive approach to identifying and analyzing proposed regulations and policies that could impact the ADOT program. EEG is currently working to identify potential impacts to the program due to the recently proposed critical habitat for Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl in order to be able to address the implications of these types of policies before they are finalized.

ADOT, facilitated by the EEG biology team, has enabled the University of Arizona and the Arizona Game and Fish Department to study the relationship between highways and Pygmy Owls by funding a research study in both Mexico and Arizona.

The study will look at impacts of roadway noise on the owls regarding nesting, dispersal, and mating. By gaining more information on these relationships, ADOT will be able to tailor mitigation measures to specific projects that are both appropriate and cost effective.

## Closing

In its many and varied assignments, EEG staff have and will continue to work to improve customer service, productivity, and efficiency.